

What disabled consumers choose to buy and why – Advertising



Who is this for?

'What disabled consumers choose to buy and why' is for everyone involved in improving the experience of disabled consumers whether online, by phone or in-person. The findings will be useful for customer experience managers, customer service personnel, facilities and property managers and also for D&I and HR professionals responsible for attracting and hiring customer-service staff.

Representation in advertising

Representation was seen as important both in terms of advertising disability specific and mainstream products.

"If we are hidden, people kind of forget about us."

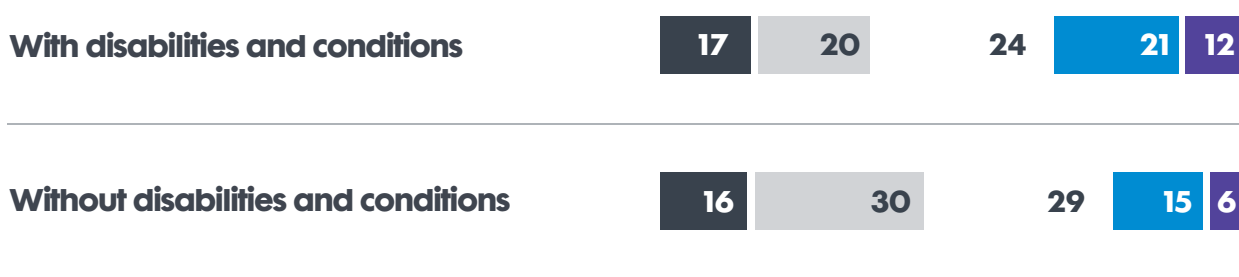
Seeing disabled people in advertising was felt to have a positive impact.

"If they use disabled people like others from the diversity spectrum it shows me that they are aiming to be inclusive – there is something positive about the culture of the organisation and that is important to me."

"You don't think you are represented much when you see marketing – [it's] nice in that moment when the [Hilfiger] advert came out – that is someone like me."

However, our data indicates that significantly fewer respondents with disabilities and conditions are likely to agree that businesses advertised directly to them. In the Ipsos Mori survey all respondents were asked for their level of agreement to the statement “In general, I feel that business advertises to people like me.” Individuals with disabilities and conditions were significantly less likely to agree that this was the case compared to those without (38 per cent compared to 46 per cent) and more likely to disagree (33 per cent compared to 20 per cent).

Chart 8: In general, I feel that business advertises to people like me



Key



% of respondents

Base: Ipsos Mori Omnibus Survey 2021 (All respondents 1001) Don't know and not applicable not included in the chart.

In the focus groups, respondents generally felt that, while some brands were making disability more visible in their marketing and advertising, it is not yet widespread. While some participants had noticed a better representation of disability in television, with disabled presenters for instance, they felt business was behind the curve. Even for brands that are known to have built-in accessible features, it was noted that very little was mentioned about this in advertising and other mainstream marketing.

Key themes

A few themes emerged in conversations about the progression of representation in advertising:

The accessibility of advertising itself

Of course, the accessibility of the advertising itself is critical. Blind participants in the research emphasised that if there is no audio description then there is no way of knowing if disability is represented. It was also noted that some advertising now lacks spoken narrative and focuses on music (for example, Christmas adverts) and this is problematic if it is not properly described.

Finally, there also needs to be some thought about what information is included in the advertisement to ensure it 'speaks' to the consumers with disabilities and conditions.

“Making sure whatever you are marketing will make sense to whoever is needing that.”

“[It’s] important to me that I have information in the ads to enable me to make that same choice as everyone else.”

Does the advertising reflect reality?

If brands are portraying disability in their campaigns and marketing and raising expectations of inclusion, this should correspond with disabled consumers' actual experiences of interacting with the business and using their products and services.

“With any product or supplier, I come back to what they can do for me. Therefore, my overriding concern is what can they do for me, not what it shows it is doing for others.”

“Sometimes there is a disconnect between the bridge and the engine room.”

Natural context is key

Some participants raised a preference that advertising should be natural, featuring disabled and non-disabled people together and the representation of disability should be almost incidental.

Positive examples raised were a shampoo advertisement (Herbal Essence) where it became evident that the user was blind, although not immediately – but the narrative was about the shampoo itself. Other positive examples raised were a Maltesers advert and Amazon echo.

“I think they should have a mixture, show people acting positively together. Seeing people interacting with each other like it is a normal thing to do, mixing, being friends.”

The business response: Developing targeted services at a local level

For one supermarket, the idea for an autism hour was developed at a local store in recognition of the significant barriers related to sensory overload. A project plan was developed and pitched to senior leaders who agreed to trial it. Advertising was placed on social media and posters in store. Local charities were also used to get the word out.

In this instance, the personal relationship with the store manager and local charities made the relationship authentic and the combination of joined up communication about the service led to a very positive level of take up.

About Business Disability Forum

Business Disability Forum is the leading business membership organisation in disability inclusion. We are trusted partners, working with business, Government and disabled people to improve the life experiences of disabled employees and consumers, by removing barriers to inclusion.

Find out more about the benefits of joining us at businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/membership

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